

Feb. 23, 1940

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Pocahontas County
May 2, 1940

Ch. 4 Section 5a - 1

During the Industrial Period (1860-1910) the people of Pocahontas County repaired and reestablished their saw mills, grist mills, tanneries, and so forth, that they had established before the Civil War, then of course there were many new ones built and many of the old ones were under new management. These, however, were all small individual businesses just as they had been before the war. No great commercial industries were begun until 1876 when the St. Lawrence Boom and Lumber Company came into the county and began cutting the white pine, cherry and walnut and rafting it down the Greenbrier River to Ronceverte. Since Pocahontas was so abundant in these timbers, this became a very important industry. Practically all of the lumber taken from this county during the next twenty-five years was taken out in this manner.

While it became known that Pocahontas had small deposits of iron, and some marble nothing was done to develop an industry and no mineral rights were taken.

Since agriculture and grazing were the chief occupation and there was no coal, nor enough other minerals to attract corporations there was no struggle between the land owners and corporations. The land was still in the hands of the original owners or their families and was valued only for its timber, grazing and for the timber. Even yet many farmers continued to clear their fields and to roll the logs into piles and burn them not realizing that they were destroying what would have soon been worth a fortune to them.

As soon as the railroads were completed in 1901, the county began to improve for now, that transportation was available, lumber companies were anxious to open up this vast timber section. Lumber towns sprang up almost over night, but when the lumbering was done they disappeared almost as fast.

20. I couldn't find anything

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There was once a man by the name of Henry Phillips who was looking over this land in the 1790. He engaged a surveyor, William Pooge of Marlins Botton, and surveyed 41,000 acres at the headwaters of Greenbrier River. This survey took in most of that rich timber country. About the same time a Randolph County surveyor made a survey of 31,000 acres for Richard Smythe which interfered, and lapped on the 41,000 acres.

Henry Phillips having acquired this land paid little or no attention to it, not even paying the paltry taxes. With other large surveys it lay idle and useless.

The legislature of Virginia finding that such large grants hindered development, evolved the law of forfeiture. So in the 1830's and 1840's they began to cut up these lands and sell them for the benefit of the school fund. The Phillips 41,000 acres was thus disposed of to the highest bidders. It brought \$212.00 which was about the cost of surveying and selling it.

In the 1880's there was a law suit over this land because of the surveys of Phillips and Smythe. But it seems that the Smythe surveys called for a cypress and no cypress could be found in these high mountains. The work probably should have been cippus meaning a set stone. At any rate, Pocahontas county wrested from Randolph County this large territory.

This threw to Pocahontas county a big boundary of spruce and hemlock forest country so rich in timber as to render it worthless for anything else.

On the titles based on this sale of forfeitures the land rose in value until it was worth something like \$5,000,000 in one day for the timber alone, and now that the timber has been cut is held at something like \$5.00 an acre for grazing.

In 1903-1915 when the heavy growth of timber was being operated a number of towns sprang up and flourished for a while and disappeared. Among them: Wilkell, Gertude, May, Brancher, Madeline, Olive, Nida, Winterburn, Burner and Oxley. The Coal and Iron Railway. What a vision of wealth and prosperity that name once conjured. Town sprang up and drummers walked the railroad from one town to the next when the trains did not run to suit them. The above mentioned towns occupied the sixteen miles of river and railroad which lies between Durbin and where Randolph County begins at the divide.

This is now a part of the cold and barren which lies in Pocahontas. Where as it used to look stern and wild, it now looks wild and naked.

From Pocahontas Times - 1918 by Andrew Price
The above towns were only a few of the lost towns of Pocahontas. During the lumbering days towns sprang up all along the Greenbrier River and than lost their importance or ceased to exist except in name, Sitlington, Clover Lick, Harter, Campbelltown, Stilwell. This was partly after 1910, however.

West Virginia Writers' Project
RESEARCH IDENTIFICATION REPORT

Subject Commerce And Industry

Date 3/22/41

Research Worker Samuel G. Smith

Date Research Taken 3/14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
1941

Typist Samuel G. Smith

Date Typed 3/21, 22, /41

O.B. Curry, J.R. Guthrie & court records
Marlinton. W. Va.

Source Jay And William Buckley. Buckeye. W. Va.

Date Filed _____

Julian Arbuckle. Maxwelton. W. Va.

This Co. has all new men at present therefore had to contact former employees and information was hard to get.

